

# S U C C E S S



## **Red Eagle Soaring Native American Theatre Group Youth Theatre Program Smoking Cessation Play "Better Wayz to Die"**

Red Eagle Soaring (RES) Youth Theatre Program: serving Native American and Alaskan Native (Native) youth in greater Seattle, and audiences throughout the Northwest, since the early 1990's:

- Out-of-school-time acting skills workshops
- Winter Gathering: a showcase of student work-in-progress
- Spring Performance Project: development and premiere of an original play
- Summer tour: tour of Spring play, to Washington State and beyond
- SIYAP (meaning "friend" in Lushootseed, the language of Puget Sound's first people): Summer intensive drama workshop, and performance of original work.

### ***Our Mission***

Red Eagle Soaring's mission is to produce traditional and contemporary Native American theatre arts, such as plays, storytelling, and educational workshops, that entertain, inspire and educate both Native American and multi-cultural audiences, and that instill pride and self-esteem in Native American communities. Our highest priority is to serve Native American children and youth with drama workshops and performance projects.

### ***Tobacco Use and Abuse in Native American Communities***

***The traditional use of tobacco is an integral part of Indian ceremonial life. Our concern relates to the alarming rates of commercial tobacco use in our communities.***

For example:

- Smoking among Native Americans for Washington is about 35% compared to about 20% for the state population in 2004.
- Native American youth smoking rates in Washington are higher than the state population.
- In 2003, smoking rates among Native American women who are pregnant is 26.5% compared to the state average at 10.9%.
- Data show that tobacco use in Urban Indian youth is higher than for non-Indian youth and that Urban Indian youth begin smoking at an earlier age.

***Red Eagle Soaring feels a sense of urgency to address the disparities among Native American/Alaska Natives, especially among youth, relating to tobacco use.***

### ***"Better Wayz to Die"***

First conceived as a short scene in the summer drama workshop, "Better Wayz to Die" is a short one-act play, part of a smoking cessation presentation by RES students, available for touring throughout the province to schools, colleges, conferences, and community venues, supported in part by funding from the Washington State Urban Indian Tobacco Prevention and Control Program administered by the Seattle Indian Health Board. In 2005, the presentation has toured to:

- The N.A.T.I.V.E. Project's Youth Leadership/Academic Challenge Camp, Spokane, WA, April 15
- Healthy Family Days Event, Daybreak Star Indian Cultural Center, Seattle, May 7 Sponsored by United Indians of All Tribes Foundation Head Start and the Urban Indian Tobacco Control and Prevention Coalition
- Tukwila youth Tae Kwon Do Club, July 13, Tukwila Community Center
- Lower Elwha s'Klallam Canoe Journey Welcome Celebration, August 1, Lower Elwha Tribal Center
- 5th Annual National Native Conference on Tobacco Use, August 21, Portland, Oregon
- "The Best Damn Indian Show Ever!", Red Eagle Soaring SIYAP summer drama workshop performance, August 26, Daybreak Star Indian Cultural Center, Seattle
- Washington State Tobacco Prevention Conference, Multicultural Reception, November 2, Marriott Hotel, SeaTac, 5:30 pm

### ***A Personal Success Story***

At the National Native Conference on Tobacco Use in Portland in August, a Native man was outside the hotel, alone, smoking, quietly watching our youth get ready to perform. We invited him to come in and watch the performance. After the performance he came up to one of our youth, thanked her, then crushed his pack of cigarettes and put the broken pack in her hand, saying, "I will never smoke again!"

***In Red Eagle Soaring, we believe in the power of theatre to change people's lives. By presenting life stories in the context of traditional values and culture, we strengthen the lives of our youth, give them confidence in themselves and the future, and, as in this true story, change the lives of audience members.***

### ***How Our Play Addresses The Problem Of Tobacco Mis-use In Our Community.***

- Youth are engaged in a healthy activity
- Youth sign pledges to not drink, use drugs, or smoke cigarettes while participating in RES activities
- The play takes smoking cessation message out to the community
- Participating youth discuss their own experiences with smoking and with second-hand smoke with each other and with mentors, promoting healing and activism in their families/communities
- Youth are placed in touch with anti-smoking programs and peer education opportunities.
- Youth have opportunities to learn about the traditional use of tobacco in their culture.

## **Building on Success** **The Opportunities Ahead**

## **Tobacco Prevention & Control 2005 Annual Conference**